

Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862." *The Annals of Iowa* 50 (1990), 681-682.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.9483>

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conflict, the Great Sioux War of 1876-77, and here Utley gives readers a perfected interpretation of the Little Bighorn campaign. Tactically, Utley argues convincingly, Custer fought a good fight. The decisions were right. But everything that could go wrong, did. And in the end when he needed it most, "Custer's Luck" ran out.

A promotional blurb on the book's jacket calls this "clearly the best biography of Custer ever written." It is. This reviewer would also suggest that the work is a brilliant biographical interpretation. Utley provides a matchless look at one of America's most unforgettable and controversial characters. We see a personality with strengths and weaknesses, brilliance and shame, all wrapped in a perspective that gives meaning to the people and the era to which Custer was so inextricably linked. The sum is flawless. Future scholars of Custer and the frontier army cannot afford to neglect Robert M. Utley's *Cavalier in Buckskin*.

Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862, edited by Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988. Illustrations, maps, index, notes, appendix. 344 pp. \$24.95 cloth, \$11.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY HERBERT T. HOOVER, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Renville, Two Star, Campbell, Crawford, Otherday, and Brown are among the prominent Indians who supplied accounts about the Minnesota Sioux War of 1862-63. In personal diaries, newspaper accounts, legal depositions, and the like, they shared their perceptions of subjects ranging from the causes and battles to the exodus and social consequences out of which evolved one of the most dramatic trails of tears in native American history. The editors gathered excerpts from these sources to make an important contribution to understanding the bloody conflict.

In less than a year the war transformed an intercultural relationship of guarded suspicion into one of open hatred. Gradually, open condemnations diminished with the passing of years. By the outset of the twentieth century it had become possible for Minnesotans to stage the scenes of war for state fair audiences, but as late as 1920 some officials in Minnesota continued to condemn the likes of Little Crow, while small groups of eastern Sioux struggled for survival on five tiny reserves in the state. Cultural separation remains across the region of the war nearly 130 years later, although recent attempts at reconciliation have assuaged the problem. This publication will help. Previously, most literature about the Sioux War of 1862 and its aftermath

came from non-Indians. Now, there exists under one cover a perception of reactions by articulate Indians.

The book promises benefits for several different audiences. For tribal members it provides viewpoints somewhat different from those of most non-Indians who wrote through the era of the conflict. For non-Indians it supplies a means of dealing with uneasiness and guilt over the plights of Minnesota Sioux people following the war. For scholars it offers under a single cover a compilation of opinions previously available only through considerable effort. For Indian-white relations it suggests an effort by the Minnesota Historical Society to engender reconciliation.

No negative aspects of the work come to the mind of this reviewer. A recollection of similar responses from Indian families doing personal interviews corroborate the contents. *Through Dakota Eyes* contains disturbing passages as well as heroic tales told by tribal members, and is highly recommended to thoughtful readers of all kinds—especially academicians, and persons in all walks of life who live within the boundaries of historic Sioux Country.

Wild Rice and the Ojibway People, by Thomas Vennum, Jr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988. ix, 358 pp. Illustrations, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT J. GOUGH, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

From the mid-sixteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, wild rice was central to the culture of Indian people in the upper Midwest and central Canada. In a wide-ranging and carefully researched volume, Thomas Vennum, Jr., author of a previous study of Ojibway dance, documents wild rice's social, nutritional, spiritual, and economic significance to the Ojibway. Vennum draws on historical documents, previous ethnographies, and more than twenty years of field work. Dozens of photographs incisively illustrate his text.

Perhaps the richest chapters of Vennum's fine book describe traditional harvesting methods. Under the overall supervision of rice chiefs, every year in late summer several extended families harvested the same rice fields, based in temporary lakeside camps. The entire family worked, children learned traditions, and social interaction increased. In Vennum's judgment, the camps "led to communal bonding and a sense of identity" (158). He quotes with sympathy Ojibway elders who lament the disintegration of these traditions.

Some practices had changed by the early-twentieth century—binding the rice a few weeks before harvesting was practically aban-

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